



BUILDING OUR FOUNDATION

EQUITY, DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION
YEAR ONE REPORT



CENTRAL NEIGHBOURHOOD HOUSE
NEIGHBOURHOOD LINK
ST. STEPHEN'S COMMUNITY HOUSE

Contact Details

info@tngcs.org

(t) 416.925.4363

(f) 416.925.1545

349 Ontario St.
Toronto, ON M5A 2V8

 /tngcommunityTO

 /tngcommunityTO

 /company/tngcommunityto

 /tngcommunityto

For press & media inquiries:

Laina Gibson
Vice President of Philanthropy
and Communications
laina.gibson@tngcs.org
416.691.7407 x246

General questions:

info@tngcs.org
416.925.4363

To volunteer:

volunteer@tngcs.org
416.691.7407 x236

BOOKLET DESIGN & LAYOUT BY

CONTACT info@khelnetics.com

Joint Message

Championing equity, diversity and inclusion requires a willingness to learn and share our experiences and expertise. The Neighbourhood Group Community Services (TNGCS) is committed to the eradication of oppressive practices by identifying and eliminating bias, stigma, organizational, and systemic barriers to access for all. The murder of George Floyd and the COVID 19 Pandemic were tipping points for many organizations including our own. Organizations were forced to finally admit that racism, and more specifically anti-Black racism, has had particularly destructive effects on the lives of Black people.

Anti Black racism (ABR) is steeped in the ideology that Black people are not humans, which leads to a disturbing surveilling and exclusion of Black bodies. The research argues that no other humans on earth has this positioning. We focus on ABR because almost every system with which Black bodies interact work against their wellbeing.

As an employer, TNGCS also commits to anti-oppressive, anti-racist, anti-colonial practices, and resists anti-Indigenous, anti-Black racism, anti-Asian racism, Anti-Semitism, homophobia, Islamophobia, ableism, transphobia and other phobias, and isms. These practices assume that there are formal and informal cultural, political, and historical bases for power imbalances and acknowledges them in everyday interactions and within the workplace.

Over the last year, TNGCS has actively worked to acknowledge and identify oppression so we can begin to shift colonialist practices and shift TNGCS towards inclusiveness, accessibility, and social justice. This report lays out our approach to EDI work and our actions over the last year to lay the foundation for us to become a more just organization.

We have much more work to do but together we will get it done.

The work of EDI is never ending and may not be completed in our lifetimes but we are all committed to doing what we can to move forward.

BILL SINCLAIR
CEO

MORRIS BECKFORD
VP, EDI and Poverty Reduction

KHIMAR MORGAN
Co-Chairs, EDI Committee

SABAH HASSAN

CONNIE NDLOVU

AMBER KELLEN
Co-Chair, TRC Committee



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Acknowledgment

A special thank you to the EDI Committee members past and present (Sharon Rollock, Charmaine Kelegan, Sabah Hassan (past), Khimar Morgan, Connie Ndlovu, Sheri Ellis, Bill Sinclair, Natalie Johnson, Ranjith Kulatilake (past), Helen Armstrong, Maimuna Hassan (past), John Diaz, Safia Kulmiye) and the Taskforces: the TRC Committee members (Pamela Gawn, Sakina Adnan Karimjee, Grace Costa, Sheri Ellis, Dana Lythgoe, Bill Sinclair, Leanne King, Veronica Macdonald, Rozeta Aleksov, Sarah Milton-Lomax, Francesca Serwaa, Lindsey Patterson, Lorie Steer, Michael Allison, Natalie Johnson, Safia Hirsi, Tsering Palmo, Amber Kellen, Hasina Quader, Ranjith Kulatilake, Thayalini Sri, Helen Armstrong)

and to you who continue to engage in a meaningful way.

Structure of EDI and TRC

TRC Committee

EDI Committee

Equity Hiring Taskforce

The Equity Hiring Taskforce will help to promote changes to the employee life cycle (recruitment, hiring, onboarding, retention and promotions) that centre equity, diversity, and inclusion

Healing and Restorative Justice Taskforce

The Healing and Restorative Justice Taskforce will support the organization as it troubleshoots how best to address individual acts of discrimination in the workplace while taking into account their possible underlying institutional and systemic factors

The Anti-Oppression Training Taskforce

The Anti-Oppression Training Committee will support in identifying opportunities for professional development and incorporating them into practice related to equity diversity and inclusion.



Purpose and Scope of TRC Committee

The TRC will serve as an advisory body to TNGCS on issues that relate to TR policies, programs, initiatives and systems change. More specifically, the Committee will work with the VP, EDI and Poverty Reduction to

- provide high-level recommendations of actions/ action plans, initiatives, and education for the purpose of ensuring an inclusive, diverse, and de-colonized organization not limited to events, learning opportunities, policy changes etc;
- ensure that TR remains a top priority for TNGCS in areas including, but not limited to, policies, practices, processes, culture, ongoing TR training, and information
- to monitor and ensure the implementation of an action plan based on the recommendations of the agency's equity audit;
- support the ongoing education and professional development of staff and community on issues of equity, diversity and inclusion.
- communicate regularly with other committees or task groups enacting the equity audit recommendations
- work with the EDI Committee on the agency's commitment to anti-colonialism, decolonization, and working with and learning from Indigenous communities.

Purpose and Scope of EDI Committee

The Equity, Diversity, & Inclusion (EDI) Committee will serve as an advisory body to TNGCS on issues that relate to EDI policies, programs, initiatives and systems change. More specifically, the Committee will work with the VP, EDI and Poverty Reduction to

- provide high-level recommendations of actions/ action plans, initiatives, and education for the purpose of ensuring an inclusive, diverse, and equitable organization not limited to events, learning opportunities, policy changes etc;
- ensure that equity, diversity and inclusion remain a top priority for TNGCS in areas including, but not limited to, policies, practices, processes, culture, ongoing EDI training, and information
- to monitor and ensure the implementation of an action plan based on the recommendations of the agency's equity audit;
- support the ongoing education and professional development of staff and community on issues of equity, diversity and inclusion.
- communicate regularly with other committees or task groups enacting the equity audit recommendations such as the Truth and Reconciliation Committee and the Hiring Task Force
- work with the Truth & Reconciliation Committee on the agency's commitment to anti-colonialism, decolonization, and working with and learning from Indigenous communities.



Why EDI instead of DEI?

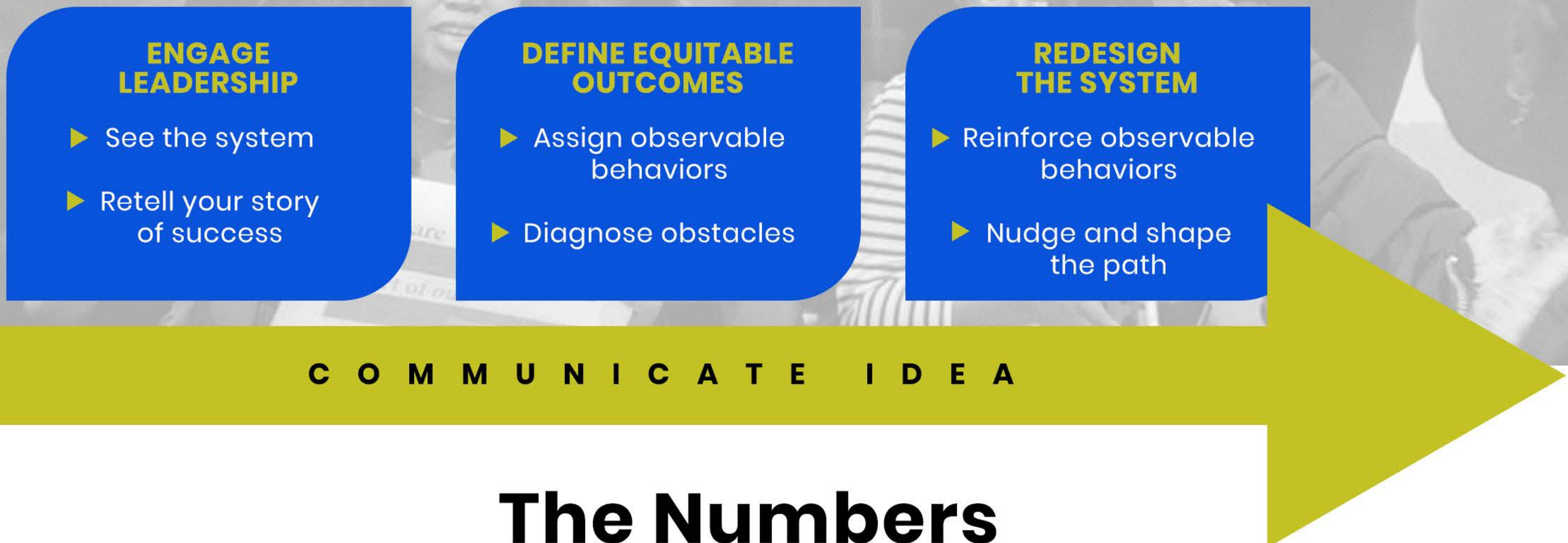
- Diversity and “Inclusion without equity is toothless; organizations end up talking about how to make people “feel more included” without doing the hard systems redesign that actually yields equal pay, more diverse leadership teams, and other signs of equal access to opportunity” (Bopaiah, 2021, p. 7)
- Diversifying inequitable spaces leads to eventual staff exit. Johnson (2012) notes that organizations that move to a place of diversity training do so by problematizing diversity not White resistance to diversity in the workplace.
- Naming, challenging and dismantling the resistance is the equity work. It must be done so that diversity can thrive.

Theory of Change

Our organization uses Minal Bopaiah's theory of change to anchor our EDI work.

Minal Bopaiah presents her theory as a three-step approach. The first step requires organizations to 'see' the system in which they function. This 'seeing' of course is very difficult because many of us are so steeped in the system we often cannot comprehend past our everyday. Men, for example, may not be able to perceive that we live in a system designed for men and so many men succeed not because of their abilities but because of their performance of masculinity.

The second step focusses on assigning noticeable actions and diagnosing problems. Bopaiah argues that change happens when people "... feel inspired or motivated or feel the pain of hanging on to old behaviour". The third and final step is system redesign. One particularly interesting piece of the redesign of system is what Bopaiah calls 'nudge'. A nudge, she argues, preserves people's free choice not to engage in building an equitable system. Of course, no sensible person would choose to continue an old system that causes them pain.



The Numbers

In 12 months we have engaged leadership and staff in the following ways



The Narrative

Internal Systems, Structures and Power Relations

- To create EDI roles across the organization, we have created a .5 EDI VP role, a .5 EDI Director role, and a 1.0 EDI Trainer role as a start. We have also started mapping current roles in each TNGCS division that currently do EDI or TRC related work.
- To take action on organizational culture to help staff feel a sense of belonging, we have:
 - ▶ launched a series of Black staff healing sessions to help Black staff begin to move to a place of healing as we work to dismantle ABR. These sessions are not meant to undo or heal all the harm faced by Black staff, they are merely a beginning.
 - ▶ seek staff input in all gender bathroom sign design and implementation.
 - ▶ involve staff in the planning and implementation of commemoration and celebration events such as BHM, AHM, NHM, JHM, PRIDE, Orange Shirt Day and so on.
 - ▶ creation of quiet rooms at 1415 Bathurst, 349 Ontario street and 3036 Danforth with more to come. These rooms act as spaces where staff can pray, or just take a moment to breathe on tough days – on days when they experience microaggressions etc. and need a space to “be”.
 - ▶ creation of our first shared space at 349 Ontario street. These spaces provide onsite computer so staff who are not able, do not have to carry a laptop around with them.
 - ▶ created a process to help the organization decide when to comment on outside social issues that may affect staff. This process was developed when a staff noted that the organization was not commenting on issues happening in her home country that was deeply affecting her and her community here in Canada.



Individual and Organizational Accountability

- We launched our Healing and restorative justice taskforce to help develop and recommend a process for healing and restoration and create systems to ensure fairness in complaints resolution.

Addressing and Identifying Barriers

- To ensure that physical spaces are welcoming and comfortable, we launched RFP process to add AC downstairs in 349 Ontario street. We are also in the process of removing all unusable furniture, equipment, flooring to ensure that the spaces where racialized and otherized staff work and welcoming and comfortable.
- To streamline our recruitment processes, we launched the Equity Hiring Taskforce. The taskforce will also help with a number of other pieces around recruitment and retention.
- To ensure that we have deeper engagement with the truth and reconciliation process we successfully relaunched our Truth and Reconciliation Committee as an organization-wide committee. We are in the process of finalizing our workplan.
- We also now have an ad hoc committee responsible for making sure that we complete a successful accessibility audit.
- Our VP EDI presented at the first International Black Health Conference in Halifax, on the impact of aggression on Black staff health.

Capacity Building Related to Equity

- To ensure EDI learning across the organization, we have launched the AO Training taskforce. A learning plan will be presented to them for review. I have also launched Snapshot Sessions – a series of 20 to 30 minute sessions in our SLT and CP meetings to help leaders see the system per our theory of change.
- We are working with partners to do Inclusive Dialogues (ID Series) aimed at enhancing staff ability to engage in discussions on matters relating to ism, phobias, aggressions, abilities and so on. Many of these have moved in person and coincide with commemoration events.
- We worked with the Ontario Black History Society to take a group of staff on a Black History tour in Niagara to learn about the history of Black peoples in Canada.
- We worked with the Ontario Jewish Archives to do a number of Jewish History walking tours in Kensington Market and learn about the history of Jews in Canada.
- We worked with the Native Canadian Centre of Toronto to organize a tour for staff to learn about the history of Indigenous peoples in Canada.
- We worked with the National Council of Canadian Muslims to organize a learning session for staff to learn about the history of Muslims in Canada.

External Systems and EDI-focused Partnerships

- We have launched a partnership with Operation Black Vote Canada to do a Mayoral candidate debate and some voter engagement work aimed at increasing voter turnout.
- We have successfully worked with a group of EDI leaders from Toronto Metropolitan University, Humber College, York University and VHA Home Healthcare to launch an EDI Think Tank called the Fran Endicott Centre for Social Justice.

What our Staff

The healing session served as a reminder to myself, and other Black staff to be proud of their history, to take up space, to use their voice to create & sustain change. Black people's ability to perform their jobs while trying to deal with racism, healing and coping through generations of trauma is unlike other racialized counterparts. Even for those who may appear fine, Black Canadian workers often numb themselves and can become desensitized in an effort to belong and often code switch to belong. Anti-black racism is a systematic issue. **TNG healing sessions created a safe space for Black staff to be authentic about their lived experiences and explore our feelings without judgement.** Our instructor let us know how important SANKOFA is to moving beyond resiliency.

As Black people, we must remember who we are in truth and move forward in strength. Beyond the healing sessions she reminded us of our individual responsibility daily to remember the power that has always existed at our core as Black people. There was a sense of respect and understanding for everyone who participated. The healing session truly promoted equity, diversity, and inclusion of Black people. It is critical to continue to have these healing sessions in order to identify practices and norms that promote wellness and real freedom for Black staff. It is important to continue to find ways to visibly manifest unity and community for Black individuals and communities impacted by racism. I was proud to be a part of the first tier of people to attend the healing sessions and I look forward to the launch of the Black/ African staff affinity group because representation matter0s.

Melissa Nyamushanya (She/Her)
Social Media & Event Organizer

Thank you very much for putting the Black Staff Healing Sessions together. **This was the first time an employer has provided such programming free of charge for me.** The sessions were eye-opening, transformative, and life-changing. They reassured me that I was in the right place as an employee and provided a safe and supportive space to process their experiences, work through emotional pain, and gain tools and resources for healing and resilience.

Tyreek Phillips (He/Him)
Program Coordinator



are saying

about Year One

It is a wonderful thing to work for an organization that gives me, as a Jewish person, space to talk about that part of my identity. In over 2 decades in social services, I have never worked for, or heard of, a community based agency that compares in this way. Now, at a time when in our own neighbourhoods and all around the world, we have seen a significant increase in anti-Semitism. However, I have never felt safe to speak about how this makes me feel or to share the fears that I have about the future of my family and my community. For the first time this year, I shared with my colleagues a bit about how it felt to attend Temple on high holy days and have my purse searched by police, for my own safety; to drive past more than 6 cruisers in front of the JCC on my way to work following the discovery of anti-Semitic graffiti. I have several close friends who have told me that they do not feel this way at their organizations; one even suggested a Jewish women's support group for those of us who feel unsupported or silenced working across the sector. But she was too fearful to organize this. Fortunately, I do not share that experience.

Rather, at TNG, I feel supported and even celebrated. The acknowledgement of the history and the value placed on the contributions of Jewish people to social justice and the vibrancy of the Kensington Market community that lives on today, is so affirming. Seeing the word "Jewish" on a banner and atop of balloon columns and alongside our TNG logo, and in our TNG colours, was truly remarkable to me. Feeling included rather than excluded; being asked to be seen rather than spending energy trying to be invisible... I am more appreciative and grateful than you can know. Dancing the Hora and listening to Yiddish songs with my colleagues, sharing Jewish foods and having a CEO and senior leaders dedicate resources for and fully participate in the Jewish Heritage launch event left my heart so incredibly full.

Amber Kellen (She/Her)
Director

The EDI Workplan (2023-2025)

OUR PLANS FOR THE NEXT THREE YEARS

AUDIT RECOMMENDATIONS	2023	2024	2025
An organizational-wide equity policy be developed that details equity commitments and requires alignment from each new and existing organizational policy and practice	█		
TNG's bylaws and strategic plan be reviewed to reflect its commitment to equity and align with the organization's equity policy	█	█	
TNG to create EDI leadership positions across all departments	█	█	█
TNG to work with an external partner to conduct an accessibility audit to create a strategy for addressing inaccessible buildings and organizational practices	█	█	
TNG to create gender-neutral washrooms in each building.	█		
TNG to work with external community groups to create and enact strategies to be a trans-positive workplace and service provider	█		
Equity lens be applied to health and safety policies, procedures and practices and that the health and safety committee receive appropriate equity training	█	█	
An equity partnership accountability framework be developed to guide effective partnerships that are grounded in equity-based principles		█	
TNG to continue working with community partners to identify the needs and culturally-specific methods of service delivery for service users that identify as Indigenous, Black and/or people of colour	█		
TNG to enhance their work with 2LGBTQ+ community partners and organizations to better support the needs of employees and services users from the 2LGBTQ+ community	█		
TNG to enhance current work with disability justice community partners and organizations that support people with disabilities to establish best practices for supporting staff with disabilities	█		

The TRC Workplan (2023-2025)

OUR PLANS FOR THE NEXT THREE YEARS

TARGETS

2023

2024

2025

Recruit/retain more Indigenous staff (First Nations, Inuit and Metis people):

- Use of Indigenous job boards for recruitment
- Review of HR and union contents for Indigenous inclusion
- Adjust hiring practices as needed
- Introduce additional job postings and new recruitment sources
- Providing additional support to staff after being hired – include in on-boarding process



Indigenous staff participation on TRC committee

- Peers
- At least one Indigenous staff member to be on TRC
- Volunteers can also join – Refer to TOR for compensation



Setting tone for safer spaces

- Making spaces more Indigenous friendly and welcoming
- Quiet Rooms are a great opportunity



Host Learning/Training Sessions & Professional Development:

- Training sessions for all staff and volunteers
- Respecting the Indigenous cultures
- Work with the EDI Training Taskforce – TRC committee member to be a part of the EDI taskforce and report back.
- 3rd party trainers; 5 staff per year; MOH CORE Training; reflections on webinars – feedback- online \$300 (Sanyas) per person from professional development budget (TNG); 1% of payroll
- Certificates of achievement



Reflect on Indigenous History

- Honouring Orange Shirt Day
- Funding for Indigenous specific positions
- Creating awareness, reflection and events
- National Indigenous Peoples Day



The Neighbourhood Group Community Services is a social agency serving more than 40,000 low-income people and families in 30 locations across Toronto. With more than 1,000 staff and the support of over 600 volunteers, our free programs and services address the most pressing issues in our community: poverty, homelessness, mental health, unemployment, social isolation, substance abuse, conflict resolution, violence, youth alienation, and the settlement of newcomers.

